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CRACKDOWN ON ESPIONAGE

The spy catchers

Pentagon may get wish — lie detector tests

By Richard Whitmire
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WASHINGTON — The Pentagon may reap an unexpected benefit from the Walker spy case — congressional approval to polygraph personnel in sensitive jobs.

But a bill passed by the House last month would swamp the Pentagon's 152 lie-detector examiners.

The House — once cool to the idea of polygraph tests — would require polygraphing for anyone receiving "special

access" clearances. Now, up to 150,000 have that clearance — and about 15,000 apply for it each year.

A Senate version calls for continuing the experimental 3,500-a-year polygraphing program. Within the next few days, a House and Senate conference will meet to compromise on the two versions.

A spokesman for Rep. C.W. Bill Young, R-Fla., who pushed the House bill, said the demand for more polygraphers could be met by expanding the polygraphing school at Ft. McClellan, Ala. Currently, 48 examiners graduate annually.

The Pentagon said the demand can't be met before 1986.

But expanding polygraphing only proves the Pentagon is succeeding by failing, believes Rep. Jack Brooks, D-Tex.

A Brooks spokesman said by not detecting the Walkers, the Pentagon is getting its wish — more polygraphing.

There's no question the Defense Department wants to beef up its polygraph program.

On June 26, one day before the House voted on its poly-

graphing bill, the Pentagon released a previously classified report on results from its experimental program.

Citing dramatic examples — although without identifying the people involved — the Pentagon said lie-detector tests over the past three years prompted spying confessions from about 11 people.

Brooks argues against expanding the tests: "It will irreparably endanger national security by erroneously clearing substantial numbers of guilty persons and security risks."